

## Why I'm Running?? – by Joe Worthington

Back in 2014 I was still attempting to play football (badly), but my ankles were both shot, I could barely get through a game and was in pain for most of the week after. I couldn't really train either, so I was getting ready to retire from football and take up golf in my old age.

However, I started doing a little bit of running and entered a couple of local races and realised all these old people were running past me and beating me. So rather than having another 6 months or so playing football, I might be able to run for a few years before breaking down completely.... Now 6 years on, I've been running everyday for over 1000 days and counting and the body is still holding together. Just!

The first couple of races I did were the Sheffield half marathon and then the Leeds 10k (I signed up to the Wakefield 10k, but slept in and missed it). From the start of my running journey, pacing has been an issue; I set off in the Sheffield half on target for a sub 1 hour 20 time .... Safe to say it didn't go well and my calf exploded and I limped in just under 2 hours - and I hated it. Then it was the Leeds 10K where I finished in just over 50 minutes and noticed most the people around me were 10-25 years older than me, whereas at football most were 10 years younger. I actually enjoyed this race, and it was where I started to think I might give this running thing a go.

Around this time, I remember my old boss telling me about this strange thing on a Saturday morning in a park in Barnsley, so I headed off to see what was going on and loved it. There was such a wide mix of people - all ages and abilities and everyone just had a chat and ran up and down the many hills then grabbed a coffee. I could get used to this! So the parkrun addiction started, although I moved to Nostell soon after, taking Debbie with me, it's still a great way to start the weekend.

After running for about a year I was happily doing my own thing, a few more races and parkruns and these white vests with a blue stripe were appearing everywhere.... But surely I wasn't good enough to join a running club?

After keeping pace with Richard Smart at the Kinsley 10k for most of the race and at parkrun the previous weekend, I decided to see who they were. Debbie was working away, so I had nothing better to do and ventured down to the Pavilion in Ackworth. Here I was greeted by one of the older members (who shall remain nameless) who introduced himself and said it was "the best knocking shop in the area". A strange introduction and I don't think they're still on the welcoming committee anymore!

I definitely remember one of my first club runs and running with the quick group, thinking I was doing OK, and then me and one of the other runners started to pull away from the rest. He continued to talk to me whilst upping the pace; I was really struggling as we went up the hill towards Badsworth (I think). Safe to say by the time we regrouped everyone else was laughing at me, and I'd learnt not to try and keep up with Simon Newton! I'm sure it was some sort of initiation... But I still kept coming back.

I can't believe how quickly the last 4 years have flown by, being a member of this great club with brilliant support and friendship from everyone since joining Ackworth Road Runners. I've done my first marathon and another 14 as well, and I still can't get one right. I've also done a couple of Ultra Marathons and I can't wait to see what silly ideas / challenges I get supported with moving forward.

Thanks for reading  
Joe Worthington, May 2020